

Georgia's voter data dump, Alabama bans refugees while Montana welcomes them, and how does North Dakota's unemployment rate stay so low?: US state blog round up for 14 – 20 November

USAPP Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson**, looks at the week in US state blogging. [Click here](#) for our weekly roundup of national blogs.

Northeast

This week in the Green Mountain State, *VTDigger* [reports](#) that a program in Vermont which provides services to heroin addicts such as a needle exchange and HIV screenings is due to lose most of its funding by the end of November. They say that the program is being gutted in a year which is likely to be the deadliest so far of the state's opiate crisis.

Heading south to Rhode Island, *RIPR* [writes](#) that GOP State Senator Elaine Morgan has attracted attention from across the country because of an email she sent in the wake of last Friday's attacks in Paris condemning Islam and calling for Syrian refugees in the US to be kept in a 'camp' separate from Americans.

Moving on to New York, *State of Politics* has the [news](#) that despite both the state's former Assembly Speaker, Sheldon Silver and former Majority Leader Dean Skelos currently in court on corruption charges, lawmakers in the Empire State appear to still have no plans to tighten the state's ethics laws. They say that lawmakers blame corruption in the New York legislature on the fact that lawmakers have not had a pay rise in more than 15 years.

In New Jersey, *PolitickerNJ* [reports](#) that GOP Governor, Chris Christie has described legislation currently passing through the state Assembly which would provide driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants as 'dangerous' and 'irresponsible', and has vowed to veto the bill if it ever reaches his desk. Staying in the Garden State, *Save Jersey* [says](#) that yet another New Jersey Democrat has been charged for corruption – this time in the form of a Councilman who was arrested on charges of soliciting and accepting a \$15,000 bribe from a business owner.

In the Keystone State, *PoliticsPA* looks at what the state's Republican Party really lost in the recent elections for Pennsylvania's judicial offices, including three victories for the state's Supreme Court. They [comment](#) that the Democrats' Supreme Court victories are forcing a reappraisal of how 'blue' the state has become in national elections. For many years the state was seen by many to be competitive – this may now no longer be the case.

South



New Jersey Governor Chris Christie Credit: Gage Skidmore (CC-BY-SA-2.0)

On Friday this week, *The Progressive Pulse* [reports](#) that the North Carolina will see \$600 million in business tax cuts to employers at the same time as jobless workers are struggling in the state. Employment levels in the state are still 4 percentage points below where they were prior to the recession, according to new figures.

Peach Pundit has the [news](#) that Brian Kemp, Georgia's Secretary of State, has released the names and identifying information of all of the state's 6.1 million voters. While Kemp normally releases some information on newly registered voters on a monthly basis so that organisations are able to update their records, this data contained voters' drivers license numbers, social security numbers, full names, and addresses.

Continuing south to the Sunshine State, *Saint Peters Blog* [writes](#) that hospitals in Florida have reported that in the past year they have paid \$1.5 billion in health costs for uninsured and underinsured patients.

Moving on to Alabama, *Yellowhammer* [reports](#) that the state's Governor, Robert Bentley has signed an executive order directing state agencies to use 'all lawful means necessary' to stop Syrian refugees from resettling in the state.

Y'all Politics of Mississippi takes a [look](#) at what is in store for the state and its Republican majority in both chambers of the legislature and its statewide offices. They expect state Republicans to continue with their program of fiscal prudence as well as continuing with education reforms in the state.

In December, residents of Houston, Texas, go to the polls to elect a new mayor. Ahead of the vote, *Burnt Orange Report* has [five facts](#) that we need to know about the runoff election.

Midwest

On Tuesday, *Plunderbund* has the [news](#) that the Ohio state House was due to vote on a bill which allow firearms to be carried at daycare centers, police stations and at airports.

Michigan's *Eclecta Blog* [writes](#) this week that by leading the charge against accepting Syrian refugees, the state's Governor, Rick Snyder has disgraced the state for no good reason. This comes after an interview where Snyder stated that he had no specific issue with the current refugee vetting process.

Over in Indiana, *Indy Democrat* blog has similar [thoughts](#) on that state Governor, Mike Pence's opposition to having refugees from his state, commenting that his policy defies Hoosier values of understanding and empathy. Staying in Indiana, *Ogden on Politics* [reports](#) that Republicans in the state's Senate had announced that they would support a compromise bill which would expand the state's civil rights law to include sexual orientation to also protect religious freedom. They comment that the state GOP's compromise strategy is a foolish one as it is likely to alienate the party's base, which may mean that Governor Pence's reelection efforts are doomed.



On Friday, *Progress Illinois* [says](#) that according to a recently released report from a coalition of civil rights groups, Chicago's police body camera program has been a mixed bag. One major finding from the report is that the Chicago Police Department should not let police review their own body camera footage before they write their incident reports.

North Dakota has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, at 2.8 percent. *Say Anything blog* [comments](#) that the rate is so low because most workers who are laid off are leaving the state once their jobs are gone.

West and Pacific

On Wednesday Montana's *Intelligent Discontent* [thanks](#) the state's Governor, Steve Bullock for not 'caving into [sic] the anti-refugee hysteria' and argues that the state should take in more refugees as it can certainly afford to do so.

Over in Wyoming, *WyoFile* also looks at that state Governor, Matt Mead's attitude towards taking in Syrian refugees. They [say](#) that while Mead has called for the refugee process to be halted, it's important to remember that Wyoming has been the only state to not participate in the federal refugee resettlement program.

Moving west, *Eye on Boise* [writes](#) Monday that Idaho's constitutional fund – a special fund to navigate state sovereignty conflicts with the federal government – has not paid for a winning case in nearly two decades. Since 1996, they say, the fund has paid out more than \$2.1 million on losing legal battles.

In Washington, *Strange Bedfellows* has the [news](#) that the State's Supreme Court has refused to reconsider its decision that state money cannot be used to finance charter schools, despite protests from students, teachers, and parents.

Finally, in California this week, *Fox & Hounds* [looks](#) at what they say are the unintended consequences of extending Proposition 30, which was originally passed in 2012 to raise taxes and take the state government's finances out of crisis. They say that the Proposition's original expiration date of 2018 may be extended to 2030 after the California Teacher's Association filed an initiative to extend the measure's tax surcharges.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USAPP– American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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